

HOW TO...

Simulate a tinted photo

Want to give photos added depth and colour, but don't have time for elaborate hand-tinting? Adam Banks explains a quicker way to enhance your snaps

Long before digital image editing, retouching pictures by hand was an important element of photography. It enabled you to edit out unwanted defects in images. You could also give a photo added depth by applying a tint, which usually involved painting colour on to the black-and-white image.

Today, you can add atmosphere to digital images by 'hand-tinting' your photos using an image-editing program. Open an image in your favourite editing program and convert it to greyscale (black and white). Either change the colour mode to greyscale and back to RGB, or use the Hue/Saturation filter, reducing Saturation to the minimum. Then use your program's paintbrush tools to add colour. For the most flexible way of working, create a new empty layer and paint on to that.

Tinting a photo this way will take time and effort, but there are ways to achieve a similar effect automatically. The basic principle is to overlay a blurred copy of the photo. Blurring an image smooths out fine detail and leaves soft-edged areas of colour, much like those you might paint by hand. By arranging the layered images so that the detail comes from the original photo but the colour comes from the blurred version, you can produce a convincing simulation of hand-tinting.

If you want to follow the tutorial exactly as shown here, our photo can be found on the cover disc; look for the Face.jpg file. We've used Corel Paint Shop Pro XI, but you can use the same technique in earlier versions or in any

image-editing program that supports layers and blending modes, such as Photoshop Elements.

1 Open your photo in Paint Shop Pro XI. Once it's displayed, make sure you can see the Layers palette at the right of the screen (if not, select it under Palettes on the View menu). From the Layers menu, choose Duplicate. This adds a second copy of the image on top of the first, as you can see in the Layers palette.

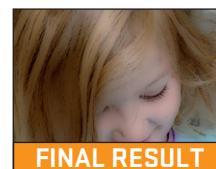
The top layer's blending mode, shown in the pick list at the top of the palette, is Normal by default; this means that it covers up what's below. What you see in the main window is now the overlaid copy.

2 Next, blur this layer. Go to the Adjust menu (this is Effects in earlier versions) and select Blur, Gaussian Blur. In the Gaussian Blur dialog box, the Radius setting governs the amount of blur. Set this high enough to smooth out areas of colour but leave the overall structure recognisable. We used 16 pixels on our 2-megapixel photo. Try a higher value for larger images and a lower value for smaller ones. Click OK to apply the blur.

3 You can now experiment with the blurred layer's blending mode. Click on the triangle to the right of Normal at the top of the Layers palette and choose Darken instead. The colours in the image are smoothed out, while detail (which is usually dark, comprising shadows, eyelashes and so on) remains but is attenuated,



ORIGINAL IMAGE



FINAL RESULT

giving it harder edges. The effect is similar to a photo that's been cleaned up and tinted by hand.

4 To simulate more garish colouring, go to the Adjust menu (or Colours, Adjust in earlier versions) and select Hue and Saturation, Hue/Saturation/Lightness (or press Shift-H). Tick Preview on Image, at the top-right of the dialog box, to see the results of your changes in the main window; the preview within the dialog box shows only the layer you're working on. Click on the turning arrow button on the right to reset the controls. Then increase Saturation, on the left, to 50. You can use the Hue slider to adjust the overall colour cast. Here we've moved it to 12 to bring out the orange colour of the hair.

5 You can get different effects by removing the colour from the original image in the bottom layer. Undo (Edit, Undo or Ctrl-Z) back to the end of Step 2, where your duplicated layer is blurred but still in Normal mode. In the Layers palette click on the lower layer, called Background. Open Hue/Saturation/Lightness as in Step 4. Reset the controls and drag Saturation to -100 (the minimum). Click OK to make the image black and white. Next, click on the upper layer and set its blending mode to Overlay.

6 To make the colouring more dramatic, go to Adjust, Brightness and Contrast, Levels. Drag both the black and the white sliders towards the middle to increase contrast, then move the grey slider left or right to adjust brightness. **CS**

